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PARSIMONIOUS PEOPLE.

It is the duty of every one to be thrifty; but it should be kept in mind there is a difference between thrift and mean parsimony. Some people who are at ease in their circumstances make themselves ridiculous by shabby attempts at saving. We once knew an old Scotch lady who, though she had a considerable sum of money left her, was parsimonious to an extraordinary extent. As she grew old she grew more miserly, until she would not allow herself milk for her tea or meat for dinner. Bent double with rheumatism in her old age, she would not pay any one to wash or clean her house, but with infinite labour accomplished these tasks for herself. She never would send for a doctor, for she pithily remarked: 'They cost a power o' siller, and did no good.' On bitter winter days we often found her shivering over a single handful of fire; a small piece of hard cheese and a cup of tea with mouldy bread, her only dinner. When she died she left about eight hundred pounds, besides various moneys in silver, copper, and bank-notes, which she had stuffed into drawers and various secret recesses. All her money went to a couple of nephews, who never paid her the least respect, and who even grudged the necessary outlay for her funeral!

An old clergyman of very mean habits got married when far advanced in life, to the great surprise of all his acquaintances, who wondered at such an act of extravagance. Upon inquiry, however, it was found that he had married entirely from motives of economy. The lady of his choice was the widow of a respectable schoolmaster, who after her husband's decease was in the habit of lending him the clothes of the defunct; so, thinking that marriage would put him in possession of the remainder of the said garments, he proposed, and was accepted! His stipend was, with glebe and other things, about two hundred pounds per annum, yet by dint of sheer niggardliness he died leaving many thousands. He made a point of picking up and taking home anything he could find—a piece of coal fallen from a passing cart,

an old lucifer-match box, pieces of stick from a neighbouring wood—anything to save outlay in his own house. He never wrote on a new sheet of paper, always using blank pages of other people's letters, and turned all envelopes outside in, so as to make them available for his own use. After his death, a drawer full of turned envelopes, gummed together in a very ingenious way, was found. On one occasion he gave a dinner, which consisted of a sheep's head minus the trotters, which were to be kept for next day's dinner.

A very wealthy gentleman of respectable family became heir to still more money from the death of a brother, also a rich man. The increase of wealth made him more wretchedly mean than formerly. He entered upon his new possessions by wearing his brother's clothes; and as his brother had been a rather meagre personage, while he himself was stout, people soon observed the sparseness of his garments. He sometimes gave presents, but only from interested motives. He dined out as often as possible, that he might save buying food; and turned his back upon all benevolent schemes. Yet, strange to say, when he died he bequeathed considerable sums to certain hospitals and charities. This was probably from motives of vanity, as he had never been known in the remembrance of any one to do a really benevolent action.

There was a Thomas Pett who died in Clifford's Passage, London, in 1803. He was a native of Warwickshire. He came to London at the age of ten with one shilling in his pocket. As he had no friends or relations in the city, he was indebted to the kindness of an old woman who sold pies, for a morsel of bread, till he could procure himself employment. Some time after, he was engaged as errand-boy by a tallow-chandler. Mrs Dip—the chandler's wife—being 'a lady of London mould,' could not endure his rustic manners and awkward gait; so she sent him off one bitter winter's night with the remark: 'Your master hired you in *my* absence, and I'll turn you off in *his*.' The good husband did not desert Tom however; he found him out, and sent him

as apprentice to a butcher in Southwark. For the first five years he had twenty-five pounds a year and meat and drink. The accumulation of money and the abridgment of expense were the two sole objects of his thoughts. His expenses were reduced to three heads—lodging, clothing, and washing. For the first he fixed on a back-room in the second-floor, with one window, that occasionally admitted a stray sunbeam. Of his dress every article was second-hand. Nor was he choice in the colour or quality; sagely observing, when he was teased about his garb, that according to Solomon there was nothing new under the sun; and that as to colour, it was a mere matter of fancy. Concerning washing, he said that no man deserved a clean shirt who could not wash it himself; and that the only fault he had to find with Lord North was the duty he imposed upon soap. There was one expense however, that always weighed heavily on his mind, and often robbed him of a night's rest, and that was shaving. He often lamented that he had never learned to shave himself. He used to console himself under this affliction by hoping that one day beards would become fashionable. He made a promise to himself that as soon as he had amassed a thousand pounds he would treat himself to a pint of porter every Saturday. Fortune soon put it in his power to perform this promise, and he continued to treat himself till the additional duty was laid on porter; he then reduced his portion to half a pint once a week. If he heard of an auction anywhere near, he ran quickly and begged a catalogue, as if anxious to buy, and after he had collected a number of these he sold them for waste-paper. When he heard an accidental rumour that the bank in which his money was had failed, he shook from head to foot and took to his bed, refusing to eat until he was assured that all was right. He was never known, even in the depth of the coldest winter, to light a fire in his room, or go to bed by candle-light. He loved good cheer—at the cost of another. 'Every man,' said he, 'should eat when he can; an empty sack cannot stand.' Once on a time he was prompted by the demon of extravagance to purchase a whole pint of small-beer; but after buying it, was so overcome by remorse that he locked it in his closet; then threw the key out of the window, that he might not be tempted to make too free with it.

Thus lived Thomas Pett, whose pulse for the last twenty years of his life rose and fell with the funds; who for forty-two years lived in Clare Market as journeyman butcher; who lodged for thirty years in one gloomy apartment, which was never brightened up with coal or candle light or the face of a visitor; who never treated man, woman, or child to a glass of any kind of liquor; who almost never ate a morsel at his own expense; who never said a civil thing to a woman; who would not trust a laundress with a pocket-handkerchief; who considered all must be mad or foolish that did not pile up gold; and who tried to bargain for his coffin half an hour before he died. He left two thousand four hundred and seventy-five pounds to distant relations, not one of whom he had ever seen or written to. The following list of his wearing-apparel, taken by a wag in the neighbourhood, runs thus: 'An old bald wig. A hat as soft as a pancake. Two

shirts that might pass for fishing-nets. A pair of stockings darned with every colour. A pair of old sandals. A bedstead. A toothless comb. A very old almanac. One old chair and wretched table. A small looking-glass. And a leathern bag with one guinea in it.'

A miser of even more penurious habits than Mr Pett was Mr Daniel Dancer, who was born in 1716, and was the eldest of four children. His father lived on Harrow Weald Common, near Harrow-on-the-Hill, where he possessed property to a very considerable amount, which his son Daniel, by a most determined and whimsical abstemiousness, increased to upwards of three thousand per annum. The childhood of Daniel Dancer passed without anything remarkable. It was only when he attained his majority that he began to display a 'saving knowledge' perfectly incredible. He had a sister whose disposition agreed perfectly with his own, and as they lived together many years, their stories are necessarily connected, and would furnish the most melancholy and degrading instance of the infirmity and folly of human nature.

Mr Dancer's wardrobe might justly boast more colours, textures, and substances than the garments of a company of strolling players, and yet notwithstanding all his curious patching, his garments often failed to cover his skin, though he strove to keep all together by a strong hay-band round his waist. Linen was a luxury to which, in spite of his avarice, he was not wholly a stranger; for at an early period of his life he used to buy two shirts every year; but for some time before his death he never allowed himself more than one. After this shirt got into his possession, it was doomed to hang upon his back till it fell off in rags, never being either washed or mended. After his sister's death, a pair of sheets as black as soot-bags were discovered upon the beds; but these Mr Dancer would never suffer to be removed; and when they were at length worn out, they were never replaced; so that after that time he relinquished the use of linen to sleep in. He never would allow any one to make his bed; and at the time of his death, it was observed to be filled with sticks which he had stolen from different hedges. His room was not swept for many years.

Mr Dancer's ingenuity in concealing his money was most wonderful: his bank-notes were usually deposited with the spiders; they were laid among the cobwebs in the cowhouse; and his guineas were placed in holes in the chimney and about the fireplace. The house, or rather the heap of ruins in which Mr Dancer lived, and which after his death Captain Holmes succeeded to, was a miserable decayed building, dreadful in its external appearance, for it had not been repaired for more than half a century. But though poor in outward appearance, the ruinous fabric was rich in the interior. It took many weeks to explore its contents. One of his richest escritores was found to be a dungheap in the cowhouse, from which a sum little short of two thousand five hundred pounds was disinterred; and in an old jacket, carefully tied and strongly nailed down to the manger were found, in bank-notes and gold, five hundred pounds more. Several large bowls filled with guineas, half-guineas, and quantities of silver, were discovered at different times in searching the corners of the house, and various parcels of bank-

notes stuffed into old cushions and chairs. In the stable, Captain Holmes found some jugs of silver money. The chimney was not left unsearched, and well repaid the trouble; for in nineteen different holes, all filled with soot, were found various sums of money, amounting to more than two hundred pounds. And to finish up with, six hundred pounds in bank-notes were found in an old teapot. Thus living wretchedly, and dying with not one vestige of comfort, Daniel Dancer and his miserly sister furnish to all future generations an illustration of the extreme of penuriousness.

An extraordinary character lived some twenty years ago in a small Scotch town on the Firth of Forth. His name was Joe Taylor. He occupied a miserable hovel, and wandered abroad over the country buying rags, old bones, &c., bundles of which were carried by a poor starved ass, the sole living creature belonging to him. The only food he allowed this wretched quadruped was the grass that grew at the side of the roads in their many wanderings, or a bundle of forage abstracted from some farm-place. Taylor's food consisted of whatever he could beg, borrow, or steal—a few turnips lifted from the fields, some mussels or other shell-fish laboriously gathered on the shore, broken victuals from houses of the rich, old cabbage-stalks, anything in short that would stop the cravings of a naturally healthy appetite. Living near the shore, Joe made a point of watching for wreckage of any sort, and it was a happy day for him when any floating cargo made its appearance on the beach. One day great excitement prevailed among the fisher-people. The surface of the waves was covered to a considerable distance by quantities of apples, probably part of some wreck. The inhabitants plunged into the sea, securing as many as they could, but were outdone by Joe, who with greedy eagerness managed to clutch a peck or two, which he sold next day in the town. After his death, which was hastened by a violent cold caught in an unusually long ramble, his hut was searched; and in various holes and corners money to a considerable amount was found—not less than eighty pounds in all. In a corner of the hovel, under a stone of the uneven and broken floor, were found no fewer than three dozen silver spoons, of all sorts and sizes, discoloured with damp and marked with various initials. It was thought that Joe in the course of his many years' depredations must have carried off a stray spoon every now and then, and so accumulated these, of which he never made any use, and which he was probably afraid to sell. It was quite possible that in Joe's visits to the kitchens of the neighbourhood he might have helped himself to what he saw lying about, while the cook brought her dish of broken scraps from some back-kitchen or cupboard. Hence the mystery of the spoons.

The instances of people in large towns living miserably and dying of starvation, while all the time hoards of money are hidden away in bundles of rags, under boards, &c., are frequently to be met with, and furnish sad proofs that the 'greed for money is greater than the love of life.' Examples of this kind are every little while recorded in the newspapers; and we sadly contemplate the fate of those who wilfully perish in the midst of plenty. A wise frugality is widely different from an unnatural meanness, and we do

not know anything more melancholy or degraded than the sight of old age grasping eagerly every coin in order to save, while all the while the poor attenuated body is sinking for want of needful food, clothing, and comfort.

MARGARET SEFTON'S SETTLEMENT.

CHAPTER III.

As the wedding-day approached, Colonel Sefton's anxiety increased rather than diminished. The sharp cold of winter seemed to be sapping his life. He was, palpably, growing weaker day by day, and it was in vain that Margaret begged that the wedding should be postponed, so that she might nurse him. He was inexorable in his resolution to see her provided with a husband before his death should expose her to a renewal of Walter's suit. Margaret, at last, gave way to his wishes, and preparations were made for the marriage, she stipulating that there should be no honeymoon, as she would not leave him to the care of others; and to this both the Colonel and Mr Mainwaring had to agree. Owing to the failing health of the master of the house, it was decided that the event should be as quiet as possible; the only strangers who were to be present, besides myself the best-man, being two old spinster ladies at whose school Margaret had received her education, and for whom she had a great affection. The settlement was accordingly prepared for the signatures of the trustees and of the betrothed couple, and everything was in readiness for the eventual occasion.

It was a bitterly cold day at the end of November, and, late in the afternoon, I drew my chair before the fire for a good warm, before leaving for my solitary bachelor home. Lulled by the dreamy warmth, I lost myself in a reverie, in which the past was mingled with the future. 'Poor boy!' I said to myself as I thought of Walter, whom I had not seen since the night that he had met me outside his father's house. Memories of the blank in my own life stirred my heart with compassion. Was he so indifferent as he had represented himself to be? For the time, I had been deceived; but now a mournful conviction came that it was but bravado, and that he felt Margaret's desertion more poignantly than we had guessed. My fears ran in a new channel as I thought of what he had told me about his own wedding. In a moment of anger and disappointment, he might be led to throw himself away upon some worthless object, and by an ill-considered act mar the happiness of his whole after-life. Filled with these dreary reflections, I put on my overcoat, and was just about to call my head-clerk to give him directions about the morrow—when I should be absent from the office, as it was the day fixed for the wedding—when the door was pushed open and a warmly clad female figure entered the room. 'Hullo, Margaret!' I cried in a surprised tone, for it was she. 'Whatever brings you here at such a time?' The Colonel is not worse, I hope?' I asked anxiously, for I began to fear that perhaps he had had another seizure of the dread disease that had laid siege to his existence.

'O no,' she replied, sitting down and unfastening her warm fur-cloak. 'I think he is a little better to-night; but he is rather anxious about the settlement, so I have called to ask you for it. Is

it ready?' There was a little nervous hesitation about her voice as she looked at me with a slightly anxious look.

It had been arranged that I should take the deed to Harlowe Crescent with me on the morning of the wedding; but knowing Colonel Sefton's morbid anxiety about the matter, I did not feel surprised that he should want to have the deed in his own possession. My co-trustee had already signed the deed, as a family bereavement had taken him abroad for a few weeks, so that he would not be able to be present at the wedding.

'Yes; here it is,' I replied, as I drew the deed from the tin box in which it was kept, and handed it to her. Her hands trembled as she took it from me and placed it on her lap, while she slowly removed her gloves.

'What a lot of writing, and how nicely it is written!' she cried, as she untied the pink tape which was fastened round it and slowly unfolded the unwieldy parchment. 'I am so nervous about to-morrow, Mr Woodroffe,' she said, after one or two attempts to read the contents of the deed. 'I want you to tell me all that I shall have to do. Must I sign my name where Mr Jamieson has signed his?'

'No,' I replied, as I pointed out the two seals intended for her and Mr Mainwaring, and shewed her where they would have to sign their names. 'You can sign it now, if you like,' I said, thinking that perhaps it might relieve her anxiety about the morrow.

She accepted my offer with avidity, and I accordingly called in one of the clerks as a witness. As soon as she had signed her name, I, as the remaining of the two trustees, signed mine.

'There!' I cried, while the old clerk was attesting our signatures; 'there is only one more now to sign, and that is Mr Mainwaring; and as you now know all the formalities to be observed in executing a deed, you might get him to sign it to-night; so that there will be nothing to do to it to-morrow. I will mark the place with a lead pencil where he is to write his name, and any of the servants who can write will do as a witness.' I pencilled his name carefully on the deed—'Owen' one side of the seal, and 'Mainwaring' the other.

Margaret watched me closely. 'How strange it all is!' she remarked as I laid down the pencil and refolded the stiff parchment. 'I suppose you have to be very careful in preparing these deeds?' she continued musingly. And then, as if struck with a sudden thought: 'What do you do if there should happen to be a mistake in the writing?' she asked. 'Does it spoil the deed?'

Old men like talking and explaining, and more especially when the auditor is a pleasant, intelligent young lady; so I at once entered into a learned explanation of deeds and documents of like importance. She listened to me very patiently for some time; but at last finding that her particular question had not been replied to, she abruptly checked my learned dissertation.

'Yes, yes!' she said somewhat sharply; 'but I asked you what you did when there was a mistake in the writing that it was *absolutely* necessary to alter.'

'Well,' I replied, 'if the alteration is an important part of the deed, we make those who have to

sign the deed, and the witnesses, write their initials by the side of the alteration, to shew that it was done before, or at the same time that the deed was executed.' To illustrate my explanation, I shewed her a deed where a name had been written wrongly, and had been altered in the way I had described to her.

She seemed satisfied with my explanation, and placing the settlement in a small bag that she had brought with her, she rose from her seat, and stood silently putting on her gloves. Her cheeks flushed once or twice, and the lips half parted as if she were about to speak. I was in hopes that she was about to confide in me; but my expectations were disappointed, although I fancied that she suppressed a sigh as she took my hand at parting, and asked me to be at Harlowe Crescent on the morrow as early as possible, as she was afraid of the effects of the excitement of the day upon the Colonel, if left too much to himself.

CHAPTER IV.

The wedding morn rose cloudy and overcast with a biting easterly wind, that chilled one through and through with cruel blighting force; but about nine o'clock the wind veered round to the south, and the heavy gray snow-laden clouds rolled their threatening darkness from the sky's bright face, and unveiled the sun's generous warmth, thawing the stony hardness of the frost-bound earth. A troublesome client who had followed me to my private residence detained me for some little time, so that I was about half an hour later than I had promised to be when I drove up to the house in Harlowe Crescent.

As soon as I entered, I saw by the scared look of the old butler who opened the door to me that something was the matter. 'Oh, Mr Woodroffe! Such a dreadful thing!' And he shook his head and groaned dismally as he assisted me in taking off my overcoat.

'What is the matter, William?' I asked in an alarmed tone. 'Is your master ill?'

'No, sir,' he sighed in reply. 'Worse—worse! My poor dear young mistress!'

'What about her? Tell me, man, quick!' I cried, as, impatient with his slowness, I grasped his arm roughly.

'Gone, sir, gone!' And tears stood in the faithful fellow's eyes, for he had known and loved his mistress from her earliest childhood, when first she had helped to fill the dull old house with brightness.

With difficulty, I managed to extract from him the information that on the arrival of the old ladies who had been Margaret's governesses, they had gone to seek her in her room, but, to their astonishment, had found it deserted. The house had been searched all over for the missing bride-elect, but without a trace of her being found.

I hurried past the old man, and opened the dining-room door. The table was laid for the breakfast, that now in all probability would not be needed; but no one was there; so I rapidly made my way to the drawing-room, where I found the whole household assembled in a terrible state of confusion. The two old ladies and the Colonel, dressed in their wedding finery, were cross-questioning Margaret's maid about her mistress; but the girl either knew nothing, or if she did, would

not say anything to throw a light on the mystery. From her calm self-possession and the deliberate answers that she made, I felt convinced that she knew more of the matter than she was telling us.

It was hard to find out what had really happened, for as soon as I appeared upon the scene, every one commenced talking at once in a state of the greatest excitement. The poor old Colonel alone was silent. He seemed dazed, and too much overcome by his grief to be of any use. He moaned feebly when I spoke to him, and wrung his hands with a piteous helpless movement as he listened to the confused stories and wild conjectures the others were pouring into my tortured ears. One thing, however, was very plain, and that was, that Margaret was not to be found in the house. Upon inquiry, I found that she had not been seen since just after her early breakfast, when she went for her usual morning visit to Colonel Sefton's room, as he never got up till after that meal.

Kneeling beside the bed, she had taken his shaking hand in hers, and raising it gently, had placed it on her head. 'Bless me, dearest father,' she had said in a strangely moved voice. 'You have been father and mother to me, and I dare not do what I have to do to-day without your sanction and blessing.'

'Why—sanction, my girl! you know you have it,' he had replied; but she, with earnest persistency, had made him repeat the word as, with uplifted hand and holy reverence, he blessed his beloved adopted daughter, and solemnly committed her to the all-protecting care of the one great Universal Father. Greatly agitated, she had risen from her knees, and throwing her arms round the old man's neck, had passionately kissed him, and, in tearful silence, left the room.

According to the maid's statement, her mistress had told her that she preferred dressing herself, and would ring for her when she needed her assistance to put the final touches to her toilet.

Miss Percival and her sister had arrived about half-past ten, and notwithstanding that Margaret's maid threw every obstacle in their way, had, with the tenacious fussiness of age, forced their way up-stairs, claiming as a right the privilege of entering the chamber of the motherless bride, who owed so much to their careful training. The girl sulkily threw open the door for them; but it was too late—the cage was there, but the bird had flown.

By my advice, a messenger was at once despatched to the church, to break the news to the expectant bridegroom of his bride's disappearance, and to seek his assistance in solving the mystery. Uneasy as I felt at Margaret's flight, yet I could not suppress a feeling of exultation at the thought of his disappointment. I was in hopes that she had repented at the eleventh hour, and in a moment of despair, had fled from the house, and taken refuge with some friend, from whom doubtless we should soon hear as to her safety; nevertheless, I could not help feeling rather piqued that I was not the friend to whom she had flown. The church where the ceremony was to have taken place was not very far from Harlowe Crescent, yet the few minutes that William was gone seemed almost a lifetime to our excited and impatient minds. He quickly returned, but with such a

scared look of consternation on his benevolent face, that we, at once, felt sure that he was the bearer of ill news. In short gasps, for he was out of breath with running, he told us that he had been to the church; but no bridegroom was there; nor had he been seen that morning by the astonished clergyman and sexton, who had been waiting for the bridal party since eleven o'clock. Mr Mainwaring's apartments were within a few minutes' walk of the church, and William had gone there before returning to us, in the hope of finding some clue to the fast-deepening mystery; but without success, for, in answer to his inquiries, he was told that Mr Mainwaring had left the house at eleven o'clock dressed in his wedding clothes, and with a flower in his button-hole. He had driven off in a cab with two strangers, who had called a few minutes before, and had been asked by the landlady into her lodger's sitting-room, where they waited until he came to them from his dressing-room. The three had got into the cab together, and seemed very friendly. She had not heard any directions given to the driver as to the place to which he was to drive them, but had supposed, as a matter of course, that the church was their destination. With the loquacity of her class she had volunteered the information that the bridegroom had looked very pale; but—to quote her words as reported by William—in her opinion that was nothing. It did credit to his feelings, poor dear man; for it was only proper that a man should be a bit overcome and nervous on his wedding-day.

Instead of clearing, the mystery was thickening. What did it mean? The clergyman was waiting; the church was ready, and so were the guests; but the bride had flown, and the bridegroom disappeared. It was like trying to play *Hamlet* with the characters of the mad Dane and his ill-fated sweetheart omitted!

But now another element was about to be added to our surprise. The fat cook bustled into the room bursting with information. From the torrent of words with which she deluged us, we made out that the butcher's young man, with whom she 'kept company,' had just called on his morning round, and in the course of conversation had told her that about ten o'clock that morning he had seen Miss Sefton, dressed in a long ulster cloak and a hat with a thick veil, walking hurriedly along Langton Street, and that at the corner she had been met by a tall young gentleman with a brown curly beard, who had placed her arm in his, and walked away with her in an opposite direction to Harlowe Crescent. He knew that it was Miss Sefton whom he had seen, for as she passed his master's shop, she had raised her veil to read a letter which she was holding in her hand, and he thus had had a good view of her face.

I felt now that it was getting serious. I began to be more alarmed. My fears deepened, for this last account looked strangely like an elopement; and it was with difficulty that I could control myself sufficiently to soothe the apprehensions of the crushed and heart-broken old man, thus doubly bereaved of his children. Hurrying down-stairs, I hastily summoned a cab, and drove at once to the house of a sharp and trustworthy detective to whom I was well known. Fortunately I found him in. I rapidly put him in possession of all the facts of the case, and anxiously awaited his opinion. 'Well, sir,' he replied thoughtfully, after I had

finished my tale, 'this certainly is a queer affair. I don't know anything about the young lady; but wherever she is, she will be better off than as the wife of Mr Owen Mainwaring, as you call him. He's safe enough, for we nabbed him this morning a few minutes before eleven, just as he was going to start for the church.'

'Nabbed him!' I cried, astonished and incredulous. 'Nabbed Mr Mainwaring? Surely you mistake.'

'Not at all,' he replied dryly. 'We are not often caught tripping. For some weeks past we have been on the look-out for Mr Owen Mainwaring, alias Brooke, alias Dundas, alias 'Foxy Bill,' and alias a dozen other names, who has long been wanted for forgery, coining, and a few other genteel employments. We had our suspicions of this gentleman, and have been watching him for the last month; but we did not know that he was the one we wanted until last night, when the mother of some wretched girl he had ill-used, hearing that he was about to be married to an heiress, revenged her child's spoilt life and early grave by betraying him to us; and we nabbed him just in time to stop him from doing any more mischief.'

The detective's story at once recalled to my remembrance the afternoon when Colonel Sefton had first told me of Margaret's engagement and approaching marriage; and how he and Mr Mainwaring had been followed by Thomson in the cab that had been intended for me. I was rather surprised at the time, but had set it down to some mistake, as detectives are not infallible. I had therefore said nothing about it, and until now it had escaped my memory. I also remembered the hollow-eyed, delicate girl I had seen crouched on the step of the Colonel's house on the night of my introduction to the scoundrel who had so craftily ingratiated himself with poor Walter's father, and who, I doubted not, was the poor victim who had thus, by the irony of fate, become the means of her destroyer's destruction. The man's object now was plain in not objecting to Margaret's fortune being settled on herself. It would thus have been protected from his numerous creditors; and doubtless he had intended to live on its proceeds—or as much thereof as he could have extorted from us by means of his wife—in some happy continental country where extradition treaties are unknown. I afterwards learned that the earlier years of his manhood had been devoted to mining, till a long course of failures had driven him to seek new pastures for his villainies nearer the great metropolis. Well indeed had the prophetic cards proclaimed him knave of spades, as many a poor widow and orphan child had learned to their bitter cost!

Starting the detective in search of our poor Margaret, I hurried back to the Crescent, my heart filled with conflicting feelings—deep gratitude to a merciful Providence for thus rescuing her from the degradation of an ill-fated marriage with a criminal, and anxious forebodings; for I knew not what fatal or irrevocable step the unhappy girl might have taken. 'Heaven help us!' I murmured fervently, as I placed my reluctant fingers on the bell-handle, for I dreaded the open door and the ill news that might be in store for me. Remorse and reproach lent a leaden weight to my heart. I had presumed too hastily in believing that Margaret was a willing

bride. I should have made stronger efforts to have gained her confidence. My old eyes grew dim, and I felt very aged and weak as my hand rested on the bell-handle I was afraid to pull; and I thought of my silent vow, when news was brought to me—years ago now—that she my soul had loved was no more, that I would be as a father to her orphaned girl. O Mary! can I meet thee again and say I have been faithful to my trust? When thou shalt ask me for thy little one, what answer shall I give thee? The sun may shine again, but dark and dreary is the chill interval while the passing storm-cloud veils his brightness. Passing! Yes; there lies our comfort. Passing—it cannot last for ever. Hope still finds a refuge in Pandora's box. 'Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.'

CONCLUSION.

I had just rung the bell, when a hansom suddenly dashed up to the house. Some one threw back the doors with a noisy bang and sprang out, with a light step, on to the pavement. I turned round with a nervous start, for I dreaded the advent of fresh sorrows, and to my joyful astonishment recognised Walter.

'O Watty!' I cried, 'I am so thankful to see you. We are in such trouble. Margaret'—The words were arrested on my lips with glad surprise, for he was deliberately assisting the dear lost girl to alight.

'My father first,' she exclaimed in a kindly tone, as I went to take her in my arms; and walking quickly past me, she entered the house, for William had just opened the door in response to my ring.

Walter hurried after her, anxiety stamped on his face; and William and I, too much astonished to speak, followed them up-stairs to the drawing-room. There was a general burst of exclamations as we made our appearance. Walter linked Margaret's arm tenderly in his and led her to his father. There was a wistful yearning look in his bright blue eyes, and his honest manly face grew pale with emotion, that to my partial eyes imparted to it an added beauty. 'Father!' he cried in low earnest tones, as they stood before the old man—'forgive her. I alone am to blame.'

There was a pause; and my heart beat in rapid throbs with the anxious feelings which almost overpowered me. Colonel Sefton half-rose from his seat and made one or two efforts to speak. Pride and offended dignity may have been struggling for the mastery, but love proved stronger than either. He turned to Margaret and held out his arms. Not a word was spoken; but with a glad cry she threw herself into his loving embrace, and nestled her soft cheeks against the old warrior's weather-worn face.

Walter stood silently watching this scene. At last he spoke. 'Father!' he said, with a subdued pathos, 'have you no word to say to me?'

Afraid to trust himself to speak or to look at the bright young face looking so pleadingly at him, the proud old man turned his head aside and put out his hand, as if motioning him away.

Margaret saw the repelling movement and averted looks. Hastily rising to her feet, she

stood by Walter, and placed her two hands on his arm. 'Then you can have nothing to say to me,' she said, and her clear young voice spoke the words with firm decision as she drew herself up to her full height with stately dignity.

Colonel Sefton started at the sound of her voice. 'Come back, Margaret!' he cried in angry tones. 'What right have you to leave me, without my consent?'

'The right of a wife to stand by her husband, whatever may befall him!' The brave words rang out; and her pale cheeks flushed, and her eyes flashed and then filled with tears as she drew herself still closer to her husband's side.

'Wife!—Husband!' gasped the old man, as if he scarcely could take in the meaning of the words. 'Then you are married!' The words came suddenly, as if he had only just comprehended what had occurred, and then he threw himself back in his chair, and with a groan buried his face in his hands.

I thought that now the time had arrived for me to speak. In a few short telling sentences, I related the result of my visit to the detective, and did not fail to make good capital out of the merciful escape which Margaret had had from being linked for life to a felon.

Colonel Sefton kept his face covered with his hands, nearly the whole of the time that I was speaking, only shewing by an occasional groan that he heard what I was saying. The father's heart was yearning towards his boy, and the hard pride which had caused the estrangement between them was fast melting. As I finished my tale, the ice disappeared, and once again the stream of affection was set flowing. He held out his hand, trembling with the feebleness of age, and with loving force it was grasped by the strong hand of youth, as with tears glistening in his eyes, the long pent-up feelings of the young generous impulsive nature burst forth, and the unhappy past was bridged over, and father and son again were one.

I turned hastily from the scene, and pretended to look out of the window, for my work was done; but I could not see anything, for a dewy mist came before my eyes and obscured my sight. At last the ill-omened word 'money' struck upon my ears. As that had been the first cause of the quarrel between Walter and his father, I began to fear a fresh unpleasantness, and that I had been premature in thinking my work completed.

'Don't trouble, father,' Walter was saying. 'Margaret's money is all settled on herself. I cannot touch a farthing of it.' As he spoke, he drew from the pocket of his overcoat the deed of settlement that I had given to Margaret the preceding afternoon.

I hastily seized and opening the deed looked at the place where I had marked 'Owen Mainwaring' in pencil. The pencil-marks were obliterated; but in their place was written, in the bold dashing characters that I knew so well, 'Walter Sefton.' It was properly signed, and duly witnessed by no fewer than three witnesses.

'Am I not a good pupil, Mr Woodroffe?' laughingly asked Margaret as she pointed to the different places in the deed where the names of Owen Mainwaring occurred. I was obliged to confess that she had indeed been an apt pupil. The obnoxious names had been neatly ruled

through, and over each place the more welcome ones, 'Walter Sefton,' had been written in Margaret's fine Italian hand. Following my instructions, each alteration had written by the side of it the initials of Walter and Margaret as well as those of the three witnesses.

I could not help laughing at Margaret's ingenuity in pumping me for information, and duping me out of the deed; for the Colonel had not sent for it, as I had imagined from what she had said to me, although with womanly sophistry she denied having told a fib, as she had only told me that the Colonel was anxious about the deed—which was the truth—and not that he had sent her to me for it. Walter had declared that he would not be married without her fortune being secured to his wife; and after much cogitation and many schemes for carrying out the project, it had struck Margaret that the deed which had been prepared for her marriage with the wretched man the Colonel had chosen for her, might, with a little alteration, be made to do just as well for her and Walter. The difficulty, however, was to obtain possession of it, and with this view, she had called at my office, as already related, when her efforts had proved more successful than she had anticipated.

They had been afraid to trust me with their secret, lest I should have warned the Colonel about it, or advised them against running counter to his wishes. They needed not to have been so distrustful; for if Margaret had confided her troubles to me, I would have done all in my power to have saved her from a distasteful marriage. Yet I did not feel quite sure that I was free from blame in the matter, as I could not hide from myself the fact that Margaret's repugnance to the match had been shewn rather plainly on the night of my visit to Harlowe Crescent; but as she had made no complaint to me—and she had had several opportunities at different times for doing so—I had thought that she had at last grown reconciled to her fate; and that as Walter seemed quite quiet about the matter, it would be better that I should let matters take their course, than, by an ill-timed interference, again wake discord.

I had long passed the days of youth, and was in the sere and yellow leaf, when riches begin to lose their charm. A successful life had enabled me to amass a large fortune; and as I always had intended that Walter and Margaret should share it when the green grass waved over my head, it was no self-denial for me to give to my godson Walter as a wedding gift that which made his fortune equal to his bride's. It still left more than enough for the comfort of an old bachelor during the few years that he will have to walk this earthly pilgrimage.

My determination relieved Colonel Sefton from the nightmare of pride which had been caused by his dread of its being thought that he had secured Margaret and her wealth for his son; and although he protested against it, yet I saw that he could not quite conceal his pleasure at this happy ending of his difficulties. I maintained my right to do as I pleased with my own; and his protestations were abruptly brought to a close by William, who with praiseworthy zeal for our creature comforts, threw open the door, and in a loud voice proclaimed that the *déjeuner* was served. His announcement

created a pleasant diversion; and the bride and bridegroom leading the way, I offered my arm to Miss Bridget Percival, and the Colonel followed with the elder lady. And thus we gathered round the table, a subdued happiness filling our hearts as, with brimming glasses, we pledged the happy pair, and sought to forget the past in the brightness of the future; for the king of hearts had indeed trumped the knave of spades. Hearts had won, and Margaret had scored the honours.

'Ah, Walter, you artful dog!' I exclaimed as the blushing bride was cutting the cake, 'I now know what you meant when, on the night that I told you of Margaret's engagement, you informed me that you were going to be married, and would guarantee that your choice would meet with my warmest approbation.'

Owen Mainwaring, alias Brooke, alias Dundas, alias 'Foxy Bill,' was tried and convicted for forgery—the other charges not being pressed, and a heavy sentence pronounced against him. His crafty and scheming spirit, however, could not rest quiet in durance, and he planned a desperate escape, in which he was nearly successful; but a bullet from a warder's gun, as he was disappearing in the thick fog which enveloped the prison on the night of his attempt, closed his mortal career, and sent him, without a moment of warning, before the great Judge from whose dread verdict there is no appeal.

Colonel Sefton has long been gathered to his fathers; and I must soon shuffle off this mortal coil and join the ranks of the Eternal; but I am content to go, for Margaret is the cherished mistress of a fond and happy home; and secure in her husband's love, she can spare the poor old bachelor, whose life's romance no one, but himself and Margaret's sainted mother, ever knew.

ORATORIO MUSIC AND ITS INFLUENCES.

No form of music so soon takes deep hold of the contemplative mind as that which is applied to Scriptural topics. Inspired writing, when presented to us in musical allegory, impresses the mind with greatly increased force, as any one will admit who has listened to Handel's magnificent choruses in the *Messiah*, or to the lovely melodies or recitatives by which the leading incidents in Christ's advent are told in that remarkable composition. Were we to inquire into the history of the oratorio, we should find it of comparatively recent date, although Old Testament writings leave no doubt that music on some well-devised system was the great medium for worshipping the Creator in the earliest times. In listening to sacred music well performed, men and women for the time forget the troubles of every-day life. The pleasant excitement caused by thrilling harmony is designed to have this effect, and any reader may be asked if he has not experienced such feelings during the performance of grand choral works? Does not an auditor, during the progress of the music, leave mundane things behind, and feel something like a foretaste of the employment of good men in a future and better world than this?

It is an undoubted fact that the salutary impressions produced by good oratorio music tend to the well-being of society, and ought to be encouraged. A modern example of such music

may be preceded by a brief allusion to what took place when Haydn the author of the *Creation* was about to take his leave of this world. Haydn had reached his seventy-eighth year when it was determined that his oratorio should be performed once more at Vienna, near which city he resided in a snug little villa. 'A hundred and sixty musicians met for the purpose. The audience numbered more than fifteen hundred people, filling the palace of Prince Lobkowitz, in which the concert was held. The poor old man insisted, notwithstanding his weakness, upon once more seeing that public assembled for whom he had laboured so much. He was conveyed in his arm-chair into the magnificent saloon, where every heart was affected. The Princess Esterhazy, and Madame de Kurtzbech, the friend of Haydn, met him. The flourishes of the orchestra and still more the agitation of the spectators, announced his arrival. He was placed in the middle of three rows of seats, occupied by his friends and the principal persons in Vienna. Before the music began, Salieri the director of the orchestra came to receive Haydn's orders. They embraced. Salieri then hastened to his place, and amidst the general emotion of the assembly the orchestra commenced. The effect produced by the sacred music, added to the sight of its great composer on the point of quitting this world, may be conceived. Surrounded by the nobility of Vienna and by his friends, by artists, and by lovely women, whose eyes were all fixed on him, listening to the praises of God which he himself had imagined, Haydn bade a glorious adieu to the world and to life. So much glory and love frequently caused him to weep, and he found himself much exhausted at the conclusion of the first act. His chair was then brought in; and as he was about to leave the concert-room, ordering those who carried him to stop, he first bowed to the public; and then turning to the orchestra with real German feeling, he raised his hands to heaven, and with tears in his eyes blessed the former companions of his labours.'

In this brief reminiscence of Haydn we see how he was loved, and how his inspired composition was the centre of that love, sending out its rays in every direction; sometimes in vocal beauties, and at other times in grand instrumental representations of creative wisdom. Who has not experienced the thrilling effect of the well-declined recitative, 'And God created man, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,' followed by the unsurpassed melody, 'In native worth;' and further where the descriptive sentence seems prolonged, to listen to the musical emphasis, 'To Heaven erect and tall—he stands—a man—the Lord—and king of Nature all.' How sweetly also, vocal and instrumental music blend in the description of man's higher intellectual faculties, thus, 'And in his eyes with brightness shines, The soul—the breath and image of his God.' And then the grandeur of this individual creation is acknowledged in the magnificent chorus, 'Achieved is the glorious work.'

While, therefore, the veneration which all lovers of music feel for Haydn is as fervent now as it was at the time to which we have alluded, and about which people read as though it was an event never to be repeated; it is most pleasing to know that England has a living composer, whose most

recent work evoked an ovation akin to that which Haydn experienced. There are many talented composers of secular music in the kingdom; but we are simply alluding to oratorio music, and England may be proud of the man who produced the oratorio *Joseph*, first performed at the Leeds Musical Festival in September 1877. The soul-stirring grandeur of the composition, and the completeness with which it was rendered, must increase the conviction that the United Kingdom holds its own in point of musical composition. Professor Macfarren, the author of the oratorio, holds the distinguished position of head of the Royal Academy of Music. The Professor composed the oratorio at the request of the Festival Committee; and in submitting the work to the immense representative audience then gathered, the music went direct to the hearts of the people. From beginning to end there was breathless attention; music and words alike commanded the deepest sympathy. That undercurrent of conversation which so often mars the enjoyment of music, was entirely absent. Old and young both listened with appreciation. Many eyes were brought to tears of enjoyment, and many cheeks quivered with that excitement which music alone can call up.

It is not intended here to give a detailed description of the oratorio, but just to indicate the success of the first performance. The Biblical narrative of *Joseph* is full of incidents susceptible of fine emotional music; and Dr E. J. Monk of York Minster, who arranged the text, knew well the highly sensitive mind and heart of the composer—his brother-in-law. The first part of the oratorio is laid in Canaan, and the second in Egypt. The chief characters are Jacob, Reuben, Joseph, Benjamin, and Pharaoh. Then there is a semi-chorus of the Nine Brethren, and choruses of Shepherds, Ishmaelites, Egyptians, and Wise Men. The orchestration is more elaborate and effective than can be found in almost any previous work whether sacred or secular. In its general effect the music is pastoral, reminding one of the tent-life of the Patriarchs. The choruses are all grand and highly descriptive, whether they are sung by Shepherds, Ishmaelites, or Egyptians, and they are all associated with characteristic instrumental music suggestive of antiquity. As an instance of fine melody we may mention Jacob's opening song, 'I dwell in the land wherein my father was a stranger; By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country,' &c. More inspiring melody can scarcely be imagined. And then the melody becomes a duet, or dialogue between Jacob and Joseph. Jacob rejoicing in his song, declares that he loves Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age, hence he had made him a coat of many colours. Joseph responds, rejoicing in such loving favour. These are the first vocal numbers of the oratorio, and they bespeak for the whole work an interest which does not flag in a single note. Chorus, song, and dialogue follow for a couple of hours with unabated interest, and that interest is bound up with delightful instrumentation. At times it is bold and martial; at other times soft and diffusive.

Many novel effects are of course imported into Ishmaelitic and Egyptian music by the aid of instruments which are not found in common use. The harp too is employed with remarkable effect, and chiefly in the melodies. At the close

of the oratorio the audience gave way to their pent-up feelings of admiration in an ovation, which increased as the Professor was led to the front of the orchestra by his brother, Mr Walter Macfarren, who conducted the performance. The Professor, it will be remembered, is blind; and the scene which now presented itself was one that can never be forgotten by those who had the privilege of participating therein. The audience included men eminent in science and art; and as the fair sex graced the palace when Haydn bade adieu to the world, so did it constitute nearly half the audience in the magnificent town-hall at Leeds, and share in the emotion of the hour. They saw before them the composer of a work which appealed to their sympathies and evoked the highest feelings of their nature—a work rendered as nearly as possible perfect, by the artists engaged in its delivery, and notably by the exquisite voices of Santley and Foli.

An elevating tendency is thus the mission of oratorio music, and as such is a species of public recreation which it would be well to promote.

WILD SPORT IN PATAGONIA.

AMONG the many curious types of semi-civilised man to be found on the continent of South America, not the least remarkable is the ostrich-hunter, who roams over the territory extending between the fortieth and fifty-third degree of south latitude, between the Cordilleras and the sea. Let the reader picture to himself a perfectly desolate region, shut in by the forbidding Patagonian coast; a long line of black rugged rocks, where Magellan and his brave followers landed in 1520, and Drake some sixty years later; a desert extending for about seven hundred miles, with an area of twice the extent of that of Great Britain, consisting only of immense arid plains, with here and there a glittering salt lake, and broken occasionally by deep ravines or cañons, with their scanty patches of alluvial soil. For thirty or forty miles at a stretch nothing is to be seen but this sombre landscape; a few straggling stunted bushes being the only shelter from the fierce winds which sweep continually over these apparently boundless wastes.

'Nature must have made Patagonia last of all her works; and the horn of Plenty from which an abundance of rich gifts had been poured over the rest of the world, was well nigh exhausted when that country's turn to be endowed came round.' So says a writer who has lately visited it. And yet this same writer, Mr Beerbohm, confesses to having experienced that strange fascination which is cast by this singular region over all who care for a time to intermingle with its necessarily sparse population. Here are to be found at certain spots encampments of the Tehuelche Indians, who, notwithstanding their decided physical and intellectual superiority over the greater part of their race, have been gradually driven southwards by the more warlike tribes; and here too, joyfully casting aside the fetters of civilisation, and facing a life of hardship and privation, dwells the ostrich-hunter. The man who adopts this peculiar vocation may be very frequently an Argentine guacho with a dash of Indian blood in his veins; but just as often he is a being of European nationality, whom accident has trans-

ferred to these regions, and who has adopted the life with as much enthusiasm as one 'to the manner born.' The whole equipment for the profession consists in a few horses and dogs, a lasso, a pair of bolas—the use of which we shall presently describe—a hunting-knife and steel, the riding accoutrements (which serve for a bed), and the indispensable capa or robe of guanaco fur. Without this latter it would be impossible to brave the biting winds and hail-storms, or to ward off the pitiless rain, which will pour down at certain seasons for days together without intermission. The dress of the ostrich-hunter consists of a shirt, a jacket, a chiripá or kind of kilt, fastened by a broad leather belt, in which he sticks his knife, revolver, pipe and tobacco-pouch; and a pair of potro boots, made in simple fashion from the skin of the leg of the horse taken off whole, softened patiently by hand, and adapted by wear to the shape of the foot. Most of his requirements are furnished to him by the guanaco—a species of alpaca—with the hide of which he makes his lasso, reins, bolas, and shoes, the flesh being also his main food. His other necessities, prominent amongst which are his tobacco and his maté or tea, he obtains by selling his ostrich feathers at Sandy Point, in the Straits of Magellan.

It is usual for two or three hunters to join company, to assist each other in their difficulties and dangers; to cheer the nights by the camp-fire, or the days of forced inaction by story or song; for the hunter is an easy-going vagabond, free alike from regrets for the past or cares for the morrow, who bears with philosophical indifference whatever fate may have in store for him.

There are two kinds of ostrich in Patagonia—the Avestruz moro (*Rhea Americana*), which is found in the north, near the Rio Negro; and the *Rhea Darwinii*, a smaller bird, that frequents the southern plains. Neither is equal in value to the African ostrich; the feathers, which are gray in the Avestruz moro, and brown and white in the *Rhea Darwinii*, being sold at the low price of from one to two dollars per pound. The latter bird is extremely shy, possessing very acute powers of vision, and requiring an exceedingly swift dog to bring it down.

When closely pressed, the ostrich will double like the hare; and thus often escapes the hounds, which are unable to stop suddenly in their impetuous course. Should the hunter be near enough to do so with effect, he swings his bolas two or three times round his head, and flinging them at the bird, brings it to the ground. These bolas—round stones or pieces of lead sewn up in the hide of the guanaco, and united by thongs of leather—are used with the greatest precision by one who is accustomed to them; a skillful man will throw them, for instance, at a refractory colt at full gallop, and pinion his hind-legs without doing him the least damage. But as it is immensely difficult to gain this art, which requires great confidence and nerve, the novice will frequently find himself throwing the bolas in precisely the opposite direction from that intended.

The Patagonian ostrich makes its nest by scooping a hole in the ground under the shelter of a bush, and placing in it a few wisps of grass to make it soft for the chicks. From ten to forty eggs may be found in a nest, twenty being, however, the usual number; and it is the male bird that takes

upon itself the duty of hatching the eggs and looking after the young. Contrary to received opinions, he is a most exemplary parent; and during rainy weather will patiently sit upon the nest for many days at a stretch; and although in fine weather he will graze for an hour or two in the evening, he will never wander to any distance, for fear of the foxes, which are always prowling about. It is said, however, that should one egg be broken or taken away, the bird will immediately miss it, and becoming furious, will dash the remaining ones to pieces.

After the hatching period, the ostrich will lay anywhere about the plains; and these eggs, which the natives call 'heuatchos,' will keep good for as long a period as six months, and are consequently very valuable to the hunter, when his other provisions become exhausted.

The yerba maté, the leaf of the *Ilex Paraguayensis*, dried and reduced to powder, is in fact the tea of South America; and from its power of resisting damp and exposure, as well as from its stimulating and refreshing properties, is exceedingly valuable to the traveller. But indeed the maté bowl is perpetually in demand at all seasons and with every class of people in South America, while yerba forms an important article of export from Paraguay. At Sandy Point the ostrich-hunter, as we have already stated, sells his feathers and obtains his supply of maté, tobacco, rice, and biscuit; and as his visits to that distant spot are few and far between, it often happens that he is denied even these. On such occasions, although the amount of meat which he consumes is something astounding, he is nevertheless tormented with an almost insatiable hunger, and his strength diminishes perceptibly; indeed, but for the ostrich eggs, of which, notwithstanding their indigestible character, he contrives to eat an immense number, the Pampas-hunter would be reduced to terrible straits.

The flesh of the ostrich, of which the best bits are the gizzard and the wings, is said to be not unlike that of the turkey, and some of the hunters having attained to no slight skill in Pampas cookery, serve it up in various ways. The menu is varied by a fat guanaco, or by a puma when in season, as well as by the small armadillo and several kinds of birds. The armadillo is considered quite a delicacy, and the puma is also much prized. This animal is the enemy of the ostrich and guanaco, being able to kill one of the latter, even when full grown, by a single blow of its paw.

It is, however, very cowardly, and will scarcely defend itself when attacked by man. If taken young the puma can be easily tamed, and makes a playful good-tempered pet, becoming much attached to its master and extremely fond of notice and caresses.

Guanacos are generally found in herds of from one to two hundred, although occasionally an old male may be found roaming alone. They inhabit Patagonia in immense numbers, and are fond of wading or standing in the salt lakes. The head of the animal resembles that of a camel, while the body is somewhat like the deer; the wool of a reddish yellow mixed with white. These creatures always post sentinels at some distance from their main body, which give warning of the approach of danger by a shrill cry not unlike the neighing of

a horse. It is from the skins of the young ones, when not more than three weeks old, that the Indian women form the capa, sewing them together very cleverly with their rude bone needles, and using guanaco sinews instead of thread. The dowry of a Tehuelche maiden consists very frequently of three or four new guanaco mantles; while the price paid for her by her lover will probably be six or eight mares, with the addition of some sugar and biscuit, or anything he may be able to obtain; and it is from amongst these people that the Patagonian hunter, if he goes in for such a luxury, will in most cases select his bride. If, however, matrimony does not prove agreeable to him, he will without ceremony return the recalcitrant fair one to her father's tent; and indeed, as a rule the hunter prefers to lead his wild life without being bound by ties of any kind.

He is, as has been seen, an exceptional character, his distinguishing traits being a love of liberty and an aversion to everything conventional. From the Indians he has learned the art of taming wild horses, some men being wonderful adepts in this line. Bravery, watchfulness, endurance, and sharpness of vision are the special qualifications for success, and in none of these is he found to fail; and so fascinating is the mode of life which the Pampas-hunter has adopted, that he scarcely ever exchanges it for any other. Indeed, it would seem impossible to him, after having tasted the delights of unbridled freedom and intimate communion with nature, to ever again resign himself to what he considers the annoying shackles of civilised existence.

THE OUBLIETTE.

PART II.—THE SECRETS OF PLESSIS LES TOURS.

LIFE has gone hardly with the Marquis of Clair-marais since we beheld him last. Before leaving Plessis les Tours, Louis had seen with his own eyes his 'instructions' carried out; and in one of the dungeons of which Claude had until then only heard, he had leisure to learn at what cost one braves the whims of an autocratic king.

What, compared with his now dreadful abode, was imprisonment in the comparatively pleasant gateway tower—with dainty food, space, and air, the sound of human voices, the society of Léonie? Let us look at the unfortunate Marquis as he sits in his dreary abode many months later. It is a vaulted cell, close to and below the moat. The massive stone walls are green and slimy with damp. Slimy also are the creatures that crawl over them. As to furniture, there is a ponderous oaken table, fixed to the floor; a rough block of stone for a seat; and a bench, also of stone, jutting out from the wall and covered with a straw palliasse, dirty and foul in odour. From the roof, suspended by strong chains, hangs an iron lamp. Upon the table are a pitcher of water and a lump of black bread partly eaten. The only light and air that enter this wretched place come from a narrow embrasure high up in the wall, so high, that even by standing upon his couch, Claude fails to reach it with the tip of his finger.

Twelve months of this existence have wrought

a woful change in our once gay Marquis. The king's discipline has done its work, aided by the despair to which Claude has now abandoned himself. He sits by the table, his head bowed down upon his thin white hands. One solitary gleam of sunshine comes through the loophole, and falls tenderly upon his fair hair, now tumbled and uncared for, lighting it up for a time with a shadow of its old glory—that golden hair which caught the heart of Léonie Lamarque in its silken meshes. For so long the lonely captive has been debarred the sight of sunshine, that he has ceased to look for it, and does not notice it now. In motionless apathy, that apathy which is born only when hope dies utterly, he awaits whatever may yet befall him. Perhaps just now he sleeps, and dreams of freedom!

One may perhaps wonder why the kind-hearted governor of Plessis does not ameliorate, as we imagine he could, the rigours of Claude's miserable life. But Louis had taken care of that. Whether he had cause to suspect undue leniency on the part of M. Lamarque, or whether it was dictated solely by the distrust inherent in the king's character, he had announced, before his return to Paris, that for the future the governor should visit no prisoner except in the company of two warders, chosen by himself—Louis. He condescended to explain that it was unwise to expose so valuable a life as that of his trustworthy servant, M. Lamarque, to the chance of an attack from a perhaps desperate prisoner, and therefore it was needful that assistants should be at hand; which assistants he provided. Spies, these undoubtedly were—men only too glad to report any dereliction of duty to the tyrant Louis—men only too glad to rise upon the governor's fall. In those days, the hand of so-called Justice was swift, the distance from prison to grave short!

When the unlucky Marquis of Clair-marais was first removed from the gateway tower to the dungeon, Gustave Chapellier was inclined to congratulate himself thereupon. It seemed to his benighted mind that the fact opened a straighter road to Léonie's favour. 'She would,' he said to himself, 'forget her passing fancy when she saw its fascinating cause no more;' proving by that foolish remark how utterly ignorant he was of a woman's heart. Time brought him wisdom. Claude was gone certainly, if that was any consolation to an unappreciated suitor; but was that suitor's case advanced thereby? Alas for Gustave! he found, to his disgust, that Léonie Lamarque was further from him than ever. She tolerated him before; she utterly avoided him now. If he ventured to join her on the ramparts or seek her in her mother's room, she treated him with a cold indifference. If he spoke to her, she seldom answered; but the brown eyes gazed straight before her into vacancy, into a region where Gustave was not! And the light had faded from those weary eyes, with their now constant far-away look, for they 'were with her heart,' and that was in the cell of Claude d'Estrelles. Not in idle sorrow only. Of what avail is that to those we love? But help—practical help—how could Léonie give it, as brave and faithful women had given it before to those men who were dear to them? That was the thought which day and night wearied the brain of the governor's fair child; which was with her,

imperative though almost hopeless, in her daily duties, her solitary walks round the moat, her prayers.

Like nearly all unmarried French women, Léonie was *dévot*. Having been educated in a convent near Plessis, it was her custom to go there at least once a week for the purpose of visiting the good nuns, who gladly welcomed her, and in whose charge she frequently remained all night. On these expeditions she rode her own black horse Haroun, accompanied by her own particular page Silvain, a lad devoted to his young mistress. And as no one would have been bold enough to molest the daughter of so powerful a man as the governor of Plessis, Léonie's rides were taken when and where she chose. Of late, these visits to the convent of Sainte Marguerite had been almost daily. She prayed earnestly for guidance from heaven; she vowed offerings endless and rich to her patron Saint Léon and to the Blessed Virgin, if assistance were given her in this hour of need.

At length the maiden's prayers for aid in behalf of her hapless lover were apparently heard; for falling asleep one night with Claude's name upon her lips, Léonie dreamed a strange dream. She was in the old chapel of the castle, when a panel in the carved *reredos* behind the altar flew open, and a shadowy hand pointed into a gloomy passage. She stepped into the passage, through which a shadowy form guided her steps, and a voice sad and faint, coming apparently from far away, seemed repeating to her: 'The secret way is here.' Then by one of those transitions so easy in our dreams, from an actor she became only a spectator. She saw the Marquis of Clair-marais in his dungeon, pallid and woe-begone, and sought to approach him, but could not. A something held her back, while still the same voice murmured in her ear: 'The secret way; look! the secret way.' And behold, the massive stone wall opened, and a semblance of herself, carrying a lamp, which flooded the dungeon with its light, came through. The vision approached the Marquis, and taking his hand, drew him to the dark opening. There seemed to be some words of joyful parting; then Claude disappeared; the wall closed, and the figure slowly vanished where it stood, the light dying out as the vision passed away.

'The saints have heard me!' was the young girl's joyful exclamation as she sprang up, while yet the dew lay upon the fair fields around Plessis, and threw herself down before the little oratory of her room in passionate thankfulness.

That night, when silence and sleep fell upon the fortress, Léonie, noiseless as a ghost, visited the chapel in that portion of the old building which yet remained after Louis XI. had built himself a palace whose stones were cemented with blood. Fortunately, the way to it was easy and the risk of detection not great. No restless priest kept vigil there. The tapers burning day and night before the Virgin's shrine, gave light enough for the work in hand; and commending herself to heaven, Léonie searched long and patiently upon her knees for a secret spring in the beautiful oaken *reredos*. For a long time—so long that the tapers were growing dim in the gray dawn—that search was made in vain. But success came at last. A

click—a small panel flew open, and disclosed—what? Alas! no passage, but a little cavity about two feet square, in which lay some dusty papers. Léonie swept them impatiently on to the floor, and examined carefully the opening—to no purpose. The stone wall was everywhere impenetrable; there was no sign of anything which could be used as a secret spring; and indeed had there been any, it was impossible that even Léonie's slender form could have pushed itself through the opening, still less the broader shoulders of a man. Weary and sick-hearted, the governor's daughter leaned against the altar. Of what avail were her prayers? The dream had only mocked her after all. The bitterness of this disappointment taught her how much she had hoped, and how foolishly.

The light growing stronger, warned her of the danger of being found where she was; and mechanically picking up the papers, she closed the panel and fled away to her room. Fate befriended her; she met no curious inquirers. And concealing the papers, she lay down to rest, baffled, but not conquered.

That evening, just before sunset, Léonie stood at her casement with the papers taken from the chapel, in her hand. She turned them over, having first secured her door, and looked at them idly. They were old and musty. Records of the unhappy men who had been incarcerated at Plessis, disappearing finally from human ken by means known only to the initiated; warrants, accounts, letters, such things as governors might accumulate during their regency. Disheartened, she gazed at them without interest. They did not bring her nearer to Claude. One scroll of vellum rolled off the table to her feet, and picking it up, she glanced at it carelessly before pushing it aside with the others. The glance was sufficient, for Léonie held in her hands a plan, clear and distinct, of the secret passages of Plessis les Tours! And so the blessed dream had not been all in vain. For a while she studied the plan intently, dismissing from her mind as impracticable many ways of which the approaches were too hazardous, too closely guarded; when suddenly she went swiftly to her bedside, where a carved wooden wainscot rose to meet the tapestry hangings, and sought a particular group of flowers. Therein, according to the scroll, lay a spring, and beyond it a passage leading to the dreary cell, wherein Claude was slowly lingering out his days.

Some time elapsed before Léonie could move the spring, stiff no doubt from long disuse. But finally it yielded; the panel creaked upon its rusty hinges, and there was the passage, gloomy-looking as a grave. The hour was favourable for exploration. Madame had gone into the town; the governor was occupied in compiling reports; and the maiden was safe from interruption for a while. Lighting a lamp, she passed into the opening. The way was narrow, dusty, and utterly dark, but supplied with air from one or two narrow slits in the wall, which was evidently the outer one of the castle. She shaded her lamp, that no gleam might betray her to any unfriendly eyes, although the chances of such a thing were small. Presently she came to a flight of steps; after that, another level. Then again steps, and these were green and slippery; the walls also were stained with moisture and moss-grown. The air that came through the apertures was chill and dank. Léonie shivering

in her thin white dress, shaded more carefully the lamp, which flickered in the strong draught. And now, suddenly she came to a stand-still. Her further progress was barred by an impenetrable wall of stone. It rose before her, massive and unyielding, with no sign of panel or door on its sullen face. She raised the light, and studied eagerly its rough surface; the ponderous stones covered with patches of moss, dripped with moisture, and were stained a dull red and brown by the action of time and damp. Presently her hand came in contact with a small iron bolt; and setting down her lamp, Léonie sought with all her strength—the strength of love and devotion—to move it. At length the stubborn bolt gave way, and one of the ponderous stones revolving upon a secret spring, fell back, leaving an open space. The strong will had at last won the way; and with a beating heart Léonie stepped into the dungeon of Claude d'Estrelles!

It was past sunset. At any moment the warders might be expected to make their usual rounds; and the governor's daughter remained only long enough to whisper hope and comfort to the captive, promising to return later on, when they would be safe from spies and interruption. And so they met night after night, discussing plans, possible and impossible, for Claude's deliverance; while strengthening food and wine, procured for Léonie by the faithful Silvain, soon wrought a healthful change in Claude's pallid cheeks and sunken eyes. He dared not trim his ragged locks and beard, or seek to improve the appearance of his soiled garments. Suspicion's quick glance would have detected the change. But steadily, surely, he gained strength as the days went on. And the mother and father rejoiced to see that Léonie grew brighter than she had been for many weary months, dreaming little of the hidden cause.

Grave and momentous were these interviews between the lovers; and though a beginning had been effected, how much remained to be done, before the Marquis de Clair-marais should see the outside of Plessis les Tours' grim walls! One scheme was pondered and discussed often. Its very simplicity was a recommendation; by that bold simplicity it might succeed. And so it was finally accepted and decided upon. And the 10th of June—one fortnight from that day—was fixed for the attempt which must make or mar the captive's fortunes and the fortunes of his abettors.

The time arrived. The 10th of June rose fair and bright. Léonie saw in it an omen of good fortune. But unknown to the lovers, it also lighted on his way the death-messenger from Louis! Impossible to say what caused this sudden decision on the part of the king; but so it was. Claude's sentence had gone forth. Death in its most secret, cowardly form—death by the oubliette.

A miserable man was the governor of Plessis when that warrant was placed in his hands by the envoy from Paris. It was hard enough to work the will of a merciless despot in any case. But the Marquis! the gay, pleasant young noble, who, twelve months before, had been so intimate a companion at his table—that he should be hurled to his death at midnight by pitiless hands, unhonoured, unshrived! The thought stopped the beating of M. Lamarque's kindly heart, and paled his cheek

with sickening horror. All that day he went about mechanically—like one who sees a ghastly vision, denied to other eyes. Léonie, pallid and thoughtful also, noticed her father's curious pre-occupation; but he avoided all questioning with a stern moroseness unusual with him. He heard, however, gladly, that Léonie intended visiting the convent of Sainte Marguerite that evening.

'Yes, yes; go, my child. Remain all night, and remember to pray earnestly for all unfortunates.'

'I will, my father.'

The governor shut himself up in his private apartment, thankful that the maiden would be away from Plessis' evil precincts when that unholy deed was done.

Just before sunset, Silvain brought the horses to the lodge-door. His companion mounted, and rode slowly down the court-yard, returning gravely the salutes of the soldiers who were on guard or loitering about, Silvain engaging in a laughing war of words with one of the warders standing by the great gate. After a trifling delay, the portcullis was raised; the drawbridge chains rattled as the ponderous apparatus fell clattering into its place, and the riders passed out, steadily walking their horses until a turn of the road hid them from view.

When it grew dusk, and the time came for changing the outer guard, the drawbridge was lowered once more, to permit the exit of the night patrol. With them passed out a Sister wearing the dark-blue robes and large coif of Sainte Marguerite's convent. A black muslin veil was thrown over her coif, partly shading her features.

'A good-night to you, my Mother,' said the porter, respectfully removing his cap. The Sister murmured something in return. The soldiers quickly made way for her.

'Who is it then?' said a new-comer of the guard to his comrade.

'Mother Angélique of Sainte Marguerite's,' replied the other, who was busy tightening the girths of his horse. 'She comes often to visit our ladies. She has stayed late to-day talking with Madame, no doubt. A good woman, the Mother Angélique, they say.'

'They are all good, these religious ones,' returned the other. 'But name of grace! 'tis but a dull life, it seems to me, for a woman, unless she's old and gray.'

And so talking, the men went out into the dusk, and the quiet Sister passed out of their sight.

Ten o'clock struck. M. Lamarque resolved to look once more upon the young Marquis, whose minutes of existence were so cruelly numbered, and whose murder was already arranged with those whom Louis had selected for that evil duty. His chosen warders had visited the prisoner that afternoon as usual, carrying him his ordinary allowance of bread and water, and had themselves locked the door which was never again to open for him. Eluding for once the vigilance of those warders, the governor went stealthily to the northern tower.

'Pray heaven he sleeps,' whispered he, as quietly opening the door, he raised the lamp and glanced into the cell. Claude d'Estrelles, his miserable coverlet thrown over him, lay upon his pallet. His face was turned to the wall. He never stirred. For a moment, during which he uttered a voiceless prayer, the governor gazed sadly upon the tangled

fair hair on which the lamp-light gleamed. Then reverently closing the door, M. Lamarque retreated with a heavy heart. Midnight came. The emissaries of Louis went to their appointed work. Swiftly and silently the well-oiled bolts were withdrawn. The floor opened. There was a crashing fall as the pallet and its occupant went down, and then the hideous trap closed again over its hidden prey.

SOME STRANGE GASTRONOMIC EXPERIENCES.

THE Chevalier Morelet, travelling in Central America, took up his quarters at an inn in Campeachy where the best fare the country afforded was to be obtained. On sitting down to his first dinner there, he saw, occupying a conspicuous place on the table, a dish, of the nature of which he felt extremely dubious; and seeking enlightenment from the cook, learned it was the flesh of the cazone, a creature of which he had hitherto never heard. Strolling along the beach the same evening, M. Morelet observed a fisherman towing behind his boat some sort of sea-monster, which he instinctively connected with the mysterious dish at the inn, and asked the man what fish he had got there. 'Don't you see they are cazones?' was the answering query. 'Cazones!' retorted the Frenchman; 'they are sharks!' 'Why not?' quoth the fisherman; and the murder was out. Anxious to avoid shocking the susceptibilities of strangers, the good people of Campeachy have banished the word 'turberon'—Spanish for shark—from their vocabulary, and serve up the cruel sea-monster as 'cazone'; eating it fresh and salted, roast, boiled, or fried, with such gusto that the Chevalier declares the cazone ought to be emblazoned in the arms of the city.

M. Morelet apparently lacked courage to taste the delicacy beloved by Campeachians, forgetting that a traveller should be above gastronomic prejudices, and ready to accommodate his appetite to any exigency; as his countrymen contrived to do during the siege of Paris. When lean chickens fetched eighty francs, a small rabbit fifty, and elephant went at eighteen francs a pound; cat, dog, rat, and mouse were about the only meat within the reach of folks of moderate means.

The dire necessity that made the Parisians acquainted with such strange meats passed away, but not the taste so created. Not only has horse-flesh become a recognised food, but many another dietetic dainty undreamed of in the epicurean philosophy of Paris before the siege, finds favour with citizens with strong appetites and poor purses; and doubtless the enterprising caterer who sought the suffrages of *gourmets* without prejudices, by opening a shop for the sale of badgers, weasels, ferrets, foxes, jays, rooks, owls, crows, magpies, and *gibier des gouttières*—that is, cats, rats, and mice, has been amply rewarded for his pains; and will be able to retire from business long before the directors of the Jardin des Plantes

have succeeded in acclimatising the edible dog of China.

Some score or so of contributors to a French sporting journal dined one day upon the ham and heart of a lion, killed by Constant Cheret in Algeria. The flesh of the lion was found to be particularly firm and close-grained, like that of a horse; but although pronounced palatable, it only achieved what is termed a *succès d'estime*; while the heart, skilfully prepared with truffles, was unanimously voted tough and indigestible. In fact, the French journalists were not much better pleased with their fare than was Bruce the traveller, when the guest of the Arab tribe of Welled Sidi Bojanim, 'the sons of the fathers of the flocks,' bound by vow to eat lion's flesh once every day; for the traveller found male lion-meat lean, tough, and musky in flavour; lioness-meat a trifle fatter and more palatable; and whelp-flesh the nastiest of the three.

Mindful that an unlooked-for pleasure is thrice welcome, Frank Buckland did not advise his guests on a certain occasion that they were about to enlarge their gastronomic experiences; but when the soup had been disposed of, asked a famous gourmand sitting near him how he liked it.

'Very well indeed,' was the answer. 'Turtle, is it not? I only ask because I did not find any green fat.'

Buckland shook his head.

'I fancied it had a somewhat musky taste—peculiar, but not at all unpleasant,' remarked his neighbour.

'All alligators have,' replied the host, 'the cayman especially—the fellow I dissected this morning, and which you have just been discussing.'

Half-a-dozen of the suddenly enlightened diners started to their feet, two or three slunk from the room, and the rest of the meal was enjoyed by only a portion of the original company.

'See what imagination is!' said Buckland. 'Had I told them it was turtle, or terrapin, or bird's-nest soup, or the gluten of a fish from the maw of a sea-bird, they would have pronounced it excellent, and their digestion would have been none the worse. I tell them it is alligator soup, and their gorges rise at as good a dish as ever a man need have!'

Forewarned, and therefore forearmed, were the gentlemen who lunched on octopus at the Brighton Aquarium, trying it in turn boiled, broiled, and cold. They found it excellent eating, resembling skate, but not so tender as might be. The verdict would probably have been still more favourable had the octopus been boiled first and then roasted, as is the way in Corsica, where the monster is esteemed a great delicacy.

A traveller returning to Tallahassee from a hunting excursion in Florida, was being paddled along by the shore about sunset, when suddenly a strange, grave, and prolonged sound struck his ear, and seeing nothing, he asked the negro boatman what it could be. 'O massa,' said he, 'dat is de fish dat sings. Some call it siren or mermaid fish, and others musico.' As the canoe went farther the chorus of strange voices increased in volume, and the negro was requested to throw a net in the water. He obeyed orders; and soon laid at the bottom of the boat a score of little fish about two inches long, resembling the gray mullet

in outward form. 'Dese be mermaids, massa,' said the black; 'but for de lub o' mussy, don't eat dem! They hab de lub poison. Yes, massa; when you eat one of dese fish, you fall so deep in lub you can neber get out again.' This extraordinary information did not prevent its recipient having his muscos fried, and finding himself no worse for supping than Agassiz did for breakfasting on strange fish. In the case of the latter, the experiment was made involuntarily. While pursuing his ocean researches on the coast of America, Agassiz had occasion to visit a friend's house, and took with him a copper barrel filled with alcohol, in which he had placed a number of undescribed species of fishes, some of them entirely unknown to science, to preserve them till he had leisure to examine them. For safe keeping, the barrel was put in the basement; but his friend's cook, of her own discretion, or rather indiscretion, emptied it of its contents, and fried the precious collection for the great naturalist's breakfast!

Exceedingly fishy, in more senses than one, is the Chinese *menu*. In 1867, Sir Charles Macdonnell gave a Mandarin supper at Hong-kong to the Duc de Penthièvre, the Comte de Beauvoir, and some other French gentlemen; and here is what appeared on the board—Bird's-nest soup, lily-seed soup, shark's-fat soup, shark fins in gelatinous sauce, sturgeon gills in *compote*, whale nerves with sweet sauce, fish-roe in caramel sauce, croquettes of fish and rat, stewed sea-snails with tadpoles, hashed dog with lotus sauce, cakes of coagulated blood; a sweet compound of fish-fins, fruit, ham, almonds, and essences; the feast finishing up with lotus and almond soup, warm arrack, and medicated wine. We think we would rather dine with Bishop Bompas, of the diocese of Athabaska, in North America, although that worthy prelate's dietary be confined to white-fish, pemican, moose nose, squirrel stew, deer's tongue, roast lynx, and roast beaver; with stewed rat now and then by way of a treat, and the occasional luxury of cake made of seaweed, poplar bark, herring spawn, bitter berries, seal-oil sauce, and the grease of the olukun fish.

The Athabaskan larder is not too sumptuously provided; but the Bishop is hardly to be pitied perhaps, able as he is to indulge in stewed rat and squirrel; seeing how enthusiastically a well-known naturalist labours to convince us that the last named is a most delectable dish, while rat-pie is so good that it ought to appear at every man's table. If Buckland could only make the multitude of his way of thinking, the much-to-be-desired cheapening of butcher-meat would come about more quickly than it is likely to do.

There are people who hold the butcher's trade to be altogether unnecessary. Mr Lawson, of Blennerhasset, Cumberland, one Christmas-day provided a spread for all comers, at which the usual concomitants of a Christmas feast were conspicuous by their absence. The holiday fare consisted of raw turnips, boiled cabbage, boiled barley, boiled wheat, shelled pease; oatmeal gruel enriched with chopped carrots, turnips, and cabbage; salads of the same vegetables covered with linseed jelly; and potatoes—the only hot dish on the table. There were no condiments of any sort; and for dessert each guest had to be contented with an apple and a dry biscuit. The banquet did not give the satisfaction its provider expected.

Too many cooks may spoil the broth; but one, if insufficiently instructed, will suffice to effect that untoward consummation. By simply neglecting to boil it in a cloth, Lord Malmesbury's French *chef* converted his plum-pudding into that Christmas dainty's progenitor, plum-porridge. Prince Metternich becoming acquainted with the merits of rhubarb tart in England, had the plant grown in his Austrian garden; and when it came to its proper growth, gave a dinner-party, in order to introduce rhubarb tart to Austrian gourmands. Unfortunately, the Prince, instead of specially instructing his cook, merely ordered him to serve the rhubarb up dressed as it was in England. Knowing nothing of English usage, the cook, selecting the largest leaves, served them as spinach, causing many wry faces to appear at the board, at which the English dish never again appeared.

Equally unlucky was Mr Peabody when, having received a gift of ten ears of green maize, he determined to renew the recollections of his youth, and at the same time delight his American, and astonish his English friends by having it served in American style. Plates of butter and salt were set before each guest, and the host announced he was about to treat them to a most delicious American dish. Then entered the butler, bearing a large covered dish, which he solemnly deposited in front of Mr Peabody. In another moment he had whisked off the cover, and the expectant diners beheld a pile of corn-cobs. The banker gazed for an instant in mute horror and dismay, ere he found voice to summon the cook—a man who had never seen an ear of Indian corn in his life before—and demand an explanation. He maintained he had followed his master's instructions to strip off all the outside before boiling; the truth being he had bettered those instructions by taking off not only the husks but the kernels as well.

An English travelling party passing, some hundred years back, through Charlton, Massachusetts, gave the landlady of the inn at which they put up some coffee and tea to prepare for breakfast, the former unground. The dame had never set eyes on either till then, but was not inclined to acknowledge her ignorance; so, when the travellers called for their tea and coffee, she astonished them by announcing that the 'yarbs' were done, but the 'beans' would not boil soft.

Anything one eats or imbibes with pleasure to the palate, followed by no unpleasant after-sensations, should be taken for granted. It is courting discomfort to pry too curiously into its composition. Some forty years ago, the ship *Governor Endicott* arrived at Salem, Massachusetts, from India; and there landed several missionaries, who departed at once for Boston to report their arrival to the Missionary Board, leaving their belongings at the Lafayette Hotel. There they attracted the attention of a custom-house clerk, who, noting the presence of a cask, suspected an evasion of duty, and reported the matter to General Miller, the collector of customs. That official at once ordered baggage and cask to be sent to the custom-house for examination, and requested that the missionaries would give him a call as soon as they returned to Salem. The suspicious cask was taken into the custom-house yard, the bung knocked out, a proof-glass inserted to find out what kind of liquor was inside, in order to fix the duty on it. They all

tasted—collector, deputy-collector, naval officer, inspector, clerk, and a tribe of hangers-on. They drank it neat, they drank it with water, with sugar, with biscuits, with cheese, but could not agree what kind of liquor it was. Bets were made; and it was finally agreed to leave the knotty question to be decided by two absent inspectors—Captain Bill L— and Captain Steve R—. At last they came. They tasted. Captain L— said he would stake his reputation that it was old London Dock brandy, vowing 'he had not tasted such liquor since General Crowningshield launched Cleopatra's barge in 1818.' Captain R— declined 'to put a name to it;' he said it had a flavour different from any liquor with which he was acquainted.

The next day the missionaries arrived at the custom-house, to have their baggage passed, all save the cask of liquor. 'That must pay duty,' said the General. 'Would they inform him what spirit the cask contained?' The amused missionaries complied by telling him that when they left India they brought with them a pet orang-outang, which, dying after thirty days' experience of sea-life, had been put in a cask of rum for preservation. An explanation accounting for the peculiar flavour that had puzzled so many experienced tasters.

THE WELCOME GUEST.

A REMARKABLE FACT.

A PIGEON is not generally looked upon as a romantic bird, nor does it often exhibit an indifference to its fate when in the presence of its natural enemy—the cat; but such a thing *has* happened, and in so extraordinary a way as to induce the author of this paper—who was himself a witness of the scene—to make such a fact known as widely as possible.

It was the winter of 1863—the Christmas time when the genial Thackeray was found dead in his bed—that a wedding in which the writer took a principal part, was about to take place in St John's Church, Waterloo Road, London. On the eve of this event, the family were surprised by a strange, fluttering noise at the parlour window; and on proceeding to ascertain the cause, it was discovered that a pigeon had entered the room. It was a fine bird, and did not seem at all frightened by the number of strange faces that were gazing upon it. Suddenly it walked from the apartment, and hopped down the kitchen stairs, where, with the utmost *sang-froid*, it passed by the favourite old black cat, and proceeded to establish itself upon the kitchen mantel-piece.

In addition to the cat, there were children present, and the cook was busily engaged in preparing for the morrow's bridal feast. But the strange visitor paid no heed to either cook or children; and more astonishing still, the cat did not make any attempt to resent the intrusion. The children were, of course, delighted, and suggested that 'the poor thing was hungry;' and the next instant all kinds of delicacies were brought forth and placed before the welcome guest. It eagerly partook of them, and after an hour or two had passed away, it got so used to the inmates of the house that it actually ate out of their hands.

On the following morning—the wedding-morn—the pigeon was missed; and on seeking for it, it

was discovered standing on the steps of the door leading to the yard. In the yard itself there were three strange cats watching every movement of the bird, and evidently seeking an opportunity to pounce upon it. Here was an awkward dilemma, for though everybody was taking an interest in the wedding preparations, all were anxious that the unbidden guest should not be done to death in the midst of the universal joy and on the very day itself. But just as the chance of the poor bird's escape was becoming an impossibility in the eyes of the wedding-guests, the difficulty was solved in an unexpected and thoroughly novel manner. As the cats in question were posing themselves for the death-spring, the feline favourite of the household suddenly darted forth from the kitchen window and dispersed the enemy, who flew howling over the wall into the churchyard. The rescued guest then returned to its accustomed place in the kitchen, where it remained for several days after the wedding, and disappeared on the morning when the bride's mother, who had come from Portugal to be present at her daughter's marriage, also took her departure. No trace of the bird was ever found afterwards, nor did it ever revisit the scene from that day to this.

It was suggested at the time by a believer in the doctrine of transmigration, that the bird was really the spirit of the mother of the bridegroom, who had died in the same house about two years previously; but without going so far as this, we may observe that it was a very remarkable and noteworthy occurrence; while it should be stated with reference to the above-mentioned theory, and as a curious fact, that the mother of the bridegroom, when on her death-bed, had actually expressed her regret that she should not live to see his marriage, and had caused a room to be cleaned out and prepared for the reception of a bride, who had not then been definitively chosen!

The following lines were written on the wedding-morn:

THE WELCOME GUEST.

Hail, messenger of peace and love!
Unbidden guest, most welcome thou,
Who com'st from regions far above
To seal our marriage vow.

The form thou bearest is Divine,
The chosen medium of *His* will,
Who turned the water into wine,
And bade the seas be still.

Thrice welcome on our wedding-morn,
O sweetest harbinger of peace!
May joy within our hearts be born,
And concord never cease.

Sweet dove! we take thee for a sign,
An indication bright and sure,
That Heaven our souls doth now entwine,
And that the union shall endure.

Nearly sixteen years have passed away since this incident took place, and the wide ocean separates some of those who were present on the occasion. The little sketch may remind them of as strange a visitor as ever blessed a wedding with its presence.

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